

Recognizing the Early Warning Signs of Union Activity

It is extremely important that supervisors react in a quick, positive and aggressive manner following the first signs of union organizing. The key is to be aware of early warning signs which may or may not appear at your company. Should you recognize any of the activities discussed below, report them immediately to appropriate member(s) of management:

- Employees who usually talk to supervisors and management no longer do so.
- Employees who are speaking in a group immediately halt their discussion when a supervisor approaches.
- Employees start questioning supervisory authority with respect to job assignments.
- Employees start visiting areas they do not normally visit.
- Employees start spending more than their normal time in break rooms and cafeterias.
- Employees start spending more than their normal time in restrooms.
- Employees who are never seen together start talking and associating with each other.
- The nature of employee complaints changes and the frequency increases.
- The front office starts receiving an inordinate amount of critical and probing questions concerning certain policies and benefits.
- Argumentative questions begin to be asked in department meetings.
- “Group” complaints start to appear. Employees approach management in groups either through direct action or by petition.
- A new “leader” appears.
- The employees in the facility seem to be divided into two or more groups.
- Good employee performance starts to fall off while, at times, poor employee performance improves.
- There is a significant increase in employee turnover.
- The “language” of employees changes; union terms such as seniority, grievance, bumping, job security, job posting, etc., starts creeping into their vocabulary. Typical subjects of conversations change.
- Union news items such as contract settlements start appearing on bulletin boards, restrooms, walls, etc. Cartoons and graffiti directing humorous barbs toward the company and its administration and supervision start appearing.
- Union flyers start to appear in the workplace such as lunchrooms and breakrooms.
- Employees start to wear buttons, shirts and hats with union or political messages.
- Strangers are greeting employees and passing out literature at parking lot entrances.
- Social media posts critical about the company or members of management are brought to your attention.